

10 top tips for getting media coverage

- 1. Build your contacts list.** Check out – www.mediauk.com – you can search for all media by place name and create a list of media contacts, but be sure to update this regularly (every few months)
- 2. Build relationships.** If your local newspaper has an environment correspondent, make sure you know who they are, introduce yourself and capture their direct contact details. If there's no dedicated environmental correspondent there may be a journalist who often covers science or related topics. Be prepared for this relationship to be reciprocal – the journalist may well come to you to ask for your comment on an issue you may not be directly campaigning on. Think about how you can respond to this, e.g. passing on contact details of a more relevant local organisation.
- 3. Know your deadlines.** Every media organisation works to deadlines and you need to know what they are e.g. your local radio station probably has a morning and an afternoon news show. Contact their news desks to ask for their deadlines and aim to get your press release to the media 24 hours before you want it to be broadcast/printed. You can “embargo” it to make sure they don't broadcast/print it before you want them to.
- 4. Keep it snappy and simple.** Journalists work in a time-sensitive pressurised environment. Make your press releases and your phone conversations with them precise, clear and simple.
- 5. Get their attention.** Stories are most eye catching to journalists if they contain an example of the following: A human interest angle; controversy; local personalities; a local angle; an unexpected event; picture pointers – see below for examples. Most importantly your story must be new, i.e. not about an event that happened months ago.
- 6. Who is your audience?** Ask yourself what you really want the coverage to achieve: More supporters? Names on a petition? Consumer action? By showing how your issue really affects the quality of people's lives where you live and offering positive solutions, your network can become a respected voice for change within your community.



LOCAL CONNECTIONS: TOP TIPS

7. **Sending your press release.** Construct a concise and eye-catching press release and email it to your contacts. Copy it into the body of an email and don't include logos or attachments – these are likely to bounce back. See below for a useful format.

8. **Follow it up!** Your brilliant press release has gone to all your contacts. Now you need to call them and ask if there's anything else they need to know. News rooms are chaotic places and your email may not have been read. Be prepared to “sell” your story over the phone – remember to be concise and highlight (at most): When, where, why and who. Try to find out from the news desk when journalists are likely to be less busy, i.e. don't phone them close to their daily deadline!

9. **Prepare for an interview.** Identify your three most important top line messages, and practice these out loud in advance. Try to relax and remember your audience will not be specialists – they don't want to hear complex scientific arguments but do want to know what's important about the issue and how it might affect them. Avoid jargon and think about how you can frame your message within issues that people care about e.g. how much will this issue cost them, what affects will be felt locally (positive or negative). Plan in advance for any questions you're likely to be asked, especially tricky ones, and don't be afraid to ask the journalist what the format of the interview will be in advance. Many TV and radio interviews are pre-recorded and it is quite normal to ask for the recording to be stopped and ask for the question to be posed again if you make a mistake or are stuck. Most importantly be polite, be precise, be honest, be helpful and show your passion rather than expertise.

10. **Perseverance pays.** Don't be put off if your story doesn't get media coverage, you can always ask your local media contacts why they didn't cover it and use this advice to help construct future press releases. It could be something as simple as your story missing their deadline. Keep trying – local media relies on local stories and getting information from local organisations and groups.

See overleaf for template press release

LOCAL CONNECTIONS: TOP TIPS

Example Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE [If you want them to use it as soon as you send it out.]

Or

EMBARGOED UNTIL – Time and Date [This is a good way of giving journalists time to prepare and to ensure they don't use it until a specified time.]

[**HEADLINE – Start with a snappy title, it doesn't have to be too clever.**]

LOCAL PEOPLE CALL FOR GREEN JOBS BOOST

[**PHOTO OPPORTUNITY – What it is, where it is, when it is and contact details.**]

What: Mytown Housing Trust and 50 people from local Oxfam, Women's Institute, WDM and Friends of the Earth groups wearing green hard hats will deliver a petition to local MP for Mytown asking her to support investment in green jobs.

Where: at Mytown Town Hall

When: Saturday November 24th from 2pm – 2.30pm

Contact: Sally Bloggs – email me@me.co.uk or phone 007 007 12345

[**PARAGRAPH 1 – Summarise the story – who, what, where, when and why. All key information needs to be in this paragraph.**]

Jenny Bloggs (Liberal Democrat MP for Mytown) will be asked by Chris Christopher (Director of Mytown Housing Trust) and a coalition of local organisations to support policies in the next budget which will deliver green jobs for the UK and for Mytown, at Mytown Town Hall this Saturday November 24th from 2pm to 2.30 pm. Groups will deliver a petition signed by 1000 local people which asks the MP to support investment in a green economy.

[**PARAGRAPH 2 – Add more details to flesh out the story you have outlined in the first paragraph.**]

Over the past five years unemployment in Mytown has increased by 25% and the number of young people out of work has tripled to 15,000. The forthcoming budget presents an opportunity to boost the manufacturing sector in Mytown by securing investment for clean green energy and energy efficient products.

[**PARAGRAPH 3 – “Quotes from you or someone relevant to the story.” Don't try to cram too many points into one quote.**]

Chris Christopher of Mytown Housing Trust said: *“We're asking our MP to secure a clean, green future for the UK and to deliver the kind of jobs boost that our young people desperately need. Making sure the budget puts us on track for a low carbon future will also mean that Mytown can have a secure and thriving economic future and reinvigorate our failing manufacturing industry.”*

ENDS

[**NOTES FOR EDITORS – Provide background information in case they run a longer story. Outline in bullet points what you have to offer: pictures, interviewees etc. Outline any additional relevant information or facts and figures, but keep it short.**]

Notes for Editors

[1] MP available for interview/photos at venue from 2.30 pm.

[2] Briefing on a low carbon economy: www.green-alliance.org.uk/grea_p.aspx?id=6629